No. 18 Price : 1/- August, 1957

Soviet Survey

AN ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL TRENDS IN THE U.S.S.R.

CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM 25 HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W1

SOVIET JEWRY AFTER STALIN

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The attention of our readers is called to the subscription form enclosed with this issue.

PART I

A MINORITY UNDER PRESSURE

THE current issue of *Soviet Survey* features two studies of Soviet policy towards the Jewish minority in the U.S.S.R., both contributed by authors who have first-hand experience of their subject: one was educated at a university in the U.S.S.R., while the other spent some of his formative years as a guest of the government in a North Russian lumber camp. Both left the U.S.S.R. in the late forties, but have maintained close contact with Soviet affairs, and in particular with the Jewish population which, it will be recalled, has the status of a national minority, as have other non-Russian nationalities in the U.S.S.R. Some of the material brought together in these reports deals with events and issues to which prominence has been given in the Communist press of Poland; other aspects of the subject have not hitherto been touched upon in current literature about Soviet affairs, and it therefore seems appropriate to preface these somewhat specialised contributions with some general remarks on the subject of Soviet nationalities policy as it affects the Jewish minority in the U.S.S.R., in particular since the changes introduced after the death of Stalin. There is a sense in which Soviet policy towards the Jewish population is merely an aspect of the general nationalities problem in the U.S.S.R. —a multi-nation empire whose government has combined Russifying tendencies with autocratic practices in administration. These traditions reach back into the pre-revolutionary past, when all groups critical of the Tsarist government—the Bolsheviks no less than others, but also no more so—advocated greater freedom for the minorities. At the same time the special character of the Jewish problem already cast its shadow in those distant days (1913) when Stalin

(with some assistance from Lenin) penned his well-known essay on the national question. Here as elsewhere the existence of a separate Jewish nationality was denied on theoretical grounds, as against the views put forward by Bundists (*i.e.*, Yiddish-speaking Jewish Socialists) and Zionists; and this theoretical assessment was translated into practice after 1917, when it became the settled policy of the newly established Soviet Government to hasten the process of transforming the Jewish community into a group of Soviet citizens enjoying equal rights with all the rest and in turn shedding their religious and 'national' peculiarities in favour of general Russification. Yet in practice the autonomy granted to the Jewish community until the late thirties was interpreted in such a way as to encourage the further development of that regional culture—including Yiddish literature, newspapers, theatre, etc.—which had grown up in the old Pale of Settlement; and this development proceeded *pari passu* with the social rise of those Jewish elements who joined the Communist Party and in the process abandoned their Jewish heritage along with their Yiddish folklore. In those days Jewish Communists, in the U.S.S.R. and abroad, made a point of asserting that it was possible for the Jewish minority to develop its own cultural life along traditional lines, while individual Jews were free to Russianise themselves and to inter-marry with members of the dominant nationality. In short, it was asserted that the problem had been solved.

The extent to which these claims were ill-founded was first revealed in the late thirties when—coincidentally with the great 'purge' and the political rapprochement with Hitler Germany—administrative measures were taken to eliminate Russianised Jews from the Army and the diplomatic corps, a process later extended to many other government departments, and finally capped by the introduction of an unofficial but effective *numerus clausus* in the universities. These measures had the effect of halting the process of 'assimilation,' in that they made the Jews more conscious of their status as a national minority—a status which they shared with other nationalities in the U.S.S.R. who in varying degrees experienced the same conflicting pressures, but which in their case was aggravated by lack of a 'national' territory (for all the specious publicity given for a while to the abortive settlement experiment at Biro-Bijan, on the lower Amur). Then came the war, with its wholesale slaughter of large numbers of Soviet Jewish citizens in the Ukraine (often in circumstances suggesting indifference on the part of the Soviet authorities, and more than indifference on the part of the surrounding population) and this holocaust in turn was followed in 1948-1952 by a drive against the hitherto tolerated autonomous Jewish (*i.e.* Yiddish-language) culture which has in recent years been officially admitted in the Communist press in Poland and elsewhere. It is with this latter phenomenon and its implications that the writers in this issue are mainly concerned.

The extent to which this particular purge was part of the general policy of Russification, which was intensified after the war, remains uncertain as long as we do not know exactly what measures—beyond those listed by Khrushchev in his well-known speech—were adopted at Stalin's instigation against other national minorities. But there seems good reason to believe that Stalin was animated by a particular suspicion and dislike of the Jewish minority and there may be substance in recent reports (apparently traceable to Soviet spokesmen in Eastern Europe) that shortly before his death he had planned a mass deportation of Russian Jews to Eastern Siberia. In any case, it has become widely known that the years 1948-1952 witnessed a sweeping drive both against Russified Jewish intellectuals (euphemistically known as 'cosmopolitans') and against the Yiddish-speaking Jewish national minority, which was suddenly deprived of all its hitherto tolerated outlets: newspapers, theatres, clubs, etc. The campaign culminated in the execution, in 1952, of several dozen leading Jewish authors—an atrocity since confirmed by statements in the Polish Communist press and obliquely admitted by Soviet representatives in their statements to foreign visitors; and these measures were accompanied by a sustained attempt to discredit the State of Israel, both among Soviet citizens and in the world generally. It is unnecessary to recall the manner in which this many-sided drive culminated, in 1952-3, in the world-wide anti-

Jewish propaganda outburst linked to the 'doctors' plot' and the so-called 'Zionist conspiracy' trials in Prague and elsewhere.

Since Stalin's death in 1953, and in particular since Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Congress in 1956, the question has frequently been asked whether this whole gruesome chapter has finally been closed. The evidence assembled on both sides of this contentious issue appears inconclusive, but certain disquieting facts should be kept in mind.

First, the publicly proclaimed attitude of the post-Stalin regime is not altogether reassuring. It is noteworthy—and has indeed been frequently remarked—that although Khrushchev denounced the 'doctors' plot' as a fabrication, he did not specifically link it to the anti-Jewish campaign rampant during Stalin's closing years; nor did he list the execution of Jewish writers among the crimes of the dead dictator. Moreover, his own reported utterances—in an interview with the Jewish Communist writer Y. B. Saltsberg (cf. *Morgen-Freiheit,* New York, December 12, 1956), and on other less guarded occasions—suggest a latent primitive anti-Semitism which seems fairly typical of the social stratum from which the provincial Party bureaucracy stems; since Khrushchev is the incarnation of this group, it is not without interest to note that he apparently regards the Jewish minority as a potentially disloyal element. His Presidium colleague Mme. Furtseva has likewise gone out of her way to justify the introduction of a sort of administrative *numerus clausus* (cf. her interview with the *National Guardian,* New York, June 25, 1956). Among minor incidents pointing in the same general direction, there has recently been the case of the Soviet press attaché in Warsaw (cf. *Jewish Chronicle,* London, May 31, 1957), whose anti-Jewish utterances apparently caused the Polish Government to demand his recall. Khrushchev's semi-public remarks about his preference for 'Kowalskis rather than Abramoviches' in the Polish Communist Party, are still within general recollection. All told, a veiled form of anti-Semitism seems to have crept into the official Soviet mentality.

On the credit side one has to list the liberalisation of policy since 1953 which has made possible greater contact between Soviet Jews and foreigners; the amnesty extended to those Jewish intellectuals who survived the 'purge' of 1948-52; the tacit admission that the Jewish minority was wronged during Stalin's last years; and a slight abatement in the campaign directed against Israel, although the general pro-Arab and anti-Israeli line of Soviet foreign policy has not changed and does not seem likely to change. Jewish religious delegations have been allowed to visit the U.S.S.R., and a delegation of Soviet Jewry, headed by the Chief Rabbi, visited Paris in October, 1956. Such exchanges appear to constitute a gesture on the part of the Soviet authorities designed to demonstrate that their policy towards the Jewish minority does not differ in principle from their nationalities policy generally.

The recent rehabilitation of a few of Stalin's Jewish victims has received much publicity, and some of the more optimistic observers have hastened to describe it as a radical break with the recent past and the promise of a better future for the Jewish minority. The available facts do not appear to justify such conclusions, either in regard to the status of Russified Jewish intellectuals or—what is perhaps more pertinent to the subject of our current issue—with respect to the surviving Jewish-language culture in the U.S.S.R.

Some works of those Jewish writers and artists whose careers, and often whose lives, were destroyed in 1948-52, are being reintroduced through the back door, as it were. This applies both to those who wrote primarily in Russian and to those who wrote in Yiddish. Excerpts from their works have appeared in Soviet literary journals (in the case of Yiddish writers, in Russian translation), commentaries on their lives (but not on their 'liquidation') have been written by their friends, and special commissions have been established to publish their collected works (cf. *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* June 28 and July 26, 1956, for poems by Feffer, one of the victims of the 1952 purge; *ibid.,* April 28, 1956, on the establishment of a commission to study the works of Babel, and *Sovetskaya Kultura,* July 24, 1956, on a similar decision to study the heritage of Meyerhold). But there has been no public admission that the flower of the Jewish intelligentsia was destroyed during the 'anti-cosmopolitan' cam-

paign and in subsequent years. Nor is it likely, given the general tenor of Soviet policy, that such an admission will be made.

Soviet spokesmen have repeatedly stated that Jewish theatres, publishing houses, and newspapers will be reopened, but as yet these promises remain unfulfilled. There have been occasional programmes of Yiddish songs and poetry recitations before mainly Jewish audiences, but very little is known about the sponsorship of such occasions. It seems clear that they could not take place without the approval of the local Soviet authorities, but they do not signify a rebirth of Jewish cultural life. Rather does it appear that they fit into the current attempt to permit greater freedom to the Soviet intelligentsia as a whole. The recent slight relaxation of bureaucratic pressure on this stratum does indirectly benefit the Jewish intelligentsia as well, but Soviet spokesmen, as will be noted further on, are emphatic in denying the existence of a widespread demand for Jewish cultural autonomy. The official line is that it depends only on the Jewish population whether Jewish newspapers are to be published, as was the case until 1947. In a country where 'spontaneous' demands are seldom articulated without official approval, this is not a very convincing explanation.

Similar considerations hold good for the religious sphere. The general Soviet policy towards all organised religions has changed little since the late thirties, when the regime began to tap all the sources that could contribute to national unity in view of the approaching trial of strength with Germany. The churches were then permitted to engage in purely religious functions, on the understanding that they would support the regime. Yet within this general framework, the Orthodox Church has come to occupy a favoured position, while Judaism has the status of a pariah. Jewish religious communities barely manage to exist, and the official attitude towards them is that they are a medieval survival doomed to speedy extinction. The recent reports of America's Jewish rabbinical delegations on this subject have been confirmed by non-Jewish observers, one of whom repeated that during his travels in Belorussia he noticed that Orthodox churches devastated during the war were being repaired, while synagogues continued to lie in ruins. The number of synagogues in the Soviet Union appears to be very small (there are no exact figures), but to judge by the crowds that avail themselves of them, there are large numbers of people who would like to attend religious services. It is true that the majority of those attending are elderly ; the informal, extra-legal pressures of Soviet society discourage younger Jews from identifying themselves as believers. The available pool of human and material resources from which religious life draws its support is thus drying up. While this is true in some degree of all religious denominations in the U.S.S.R., it affects the Jewish minority most strongly, since in its case the general anti-religious policy of the regime is reinforced by nationalist and frankly anti-Jewish patterns.

The best-known recent example of this kind of silent pressure is afforded by the deliberate policy of eliminating Jews from important positions in political and economic life. Even before the actual outbreak of war in 1941, a decree made it difficult, if not impossible, for those evacuated into the interior and who subsequently returned, to regain their former status. This policy evidently continues unabated. In government services the percentage of Jews is now minimal, and from the diplomatic corps they appear to have been wholly eliminated. The existence of a quota system has in effect been admitted by the Secretary of the Moscow Party organisation, Furtseva (now a full member of the Presidium), in an interview with the *National Guardian* (June 25, 1956). Her statement was in turn interpreted by the Foreign Ministry's spokesman, Ilyichev, who explained that personnel changes involving Jews were motivated not by national discrimination but by the economic needs of the country (*New York Times,* September 17, 1956). At the top level Khrushchev himself, when interrogated by members of a French Socialist delegation last year, was only able to support his denial of a discriminatory policy by citing the example of about a dozen Jewish officials still holding important posts (*Jewish Chronicle,* London, June 8, 1956).

The misfortunes of Soviet Jewry are bound up inextricably with the policy of the Soviet Union towards Israel. A harsher line against

Israel is invariably accompanied by a tougher policy towards the Jewish minority. Soviet policy towards Israel is, of course, a function of policy towards the Arab world and does not in itself reflect an anti-Jewish bias, but Israel and the Jewish community tend to be identified in the public mind, and this identification extends to governmental attitudes as well. It was noteworthy that during the Sinai crisis of October-November, 1956, the tone of Soviet policy towards Israel was considerably harsher than towards Britain and France. The Soviet Ambassador was recalled from Israel, threatening diplomatic notes were despatched (Bulganin's note in fact called in question the very existence of Israel as a State), the Soviet press mobilised public opinion against Israel as 'a tool of British and French imperialism,' and prominent Soviet Jews were pressed to publish an open letter (*Pravda,* November 6, 1956) denouncing Israel's action.

Such fluctuations in official sentiment (like the occasional attendance of Presidium members at Israel Embassy functions in Moscow) do not necessarily portend a settled policy of making Israel's existence impossible. What they do disclose is an official *Realpolitik* which requires from the Jewish minority in the U.S.S.R. unflinching support of policies which Jews would normally oppose. There is no question of allowing this minority to express friendly feelings towards Israel. Whether in time a certain degree of emigration to Israel will be permitted appears highly questionable. Yet, paradoxically, such a development is favoured by the very anti-Semitism which has become prevalent in the U.S.S.R. The status of the Jewish minority is undoubtedly declining. Surrounded by a hostile population, severely handicapped in its social and economic life, and no longer permitted religious or cultural outlets, the Jews of the Soviet Union are under pressure to disappear as a separate group. Yet the official policy of 'assimilation' is countered by measures which tend to heighten the group consciousness of the Jews and to throw them back upon themselves. The Soviet government apparently regards the whole Jewish problem as troublesome and would like to see the Jews 'wither away' as fast as possible, but its discriminatory policies tend to promote not only assimilation but also a defensive reaction in the direction of greater group consciousness. Whether this reaction will take crypto-Zionist forms remains to be seen.

PART II

JEWISH LITERATURE IN THE SOVIET UNION

by Y. Gilboa

DURING the six and a half years between the end of 1948 and the middle of 1955 (or, to be more exact, the Geneva 'summit' conference in July of that year), the Soviet authorities maintained a policy of silence on the fate of Jewish writers and cultural figures in Russia. Rumours of their 'liquidation' had spread abroad, and speculation was rife, especially after the suppression of *Einigkeit,* the organ of the Moscow Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Many attempts were made during these years to elicit some comment from responsible Soviet quarters. But appeals to Moscow or its representatives in the West generally went unanswered. Only in rare instances did they provoke any response, and then mostly flat denials of the rumours, accompanied occasionally by counter-charges of anti-Soviet propaganda. Yet, while it was possible to deny that writers and literary leaders had been done away with, the disappearance of Jewish literature and other forms of Jewish culture from the Soviet scene was an indisputable fact that needed no confirmation. Jewish culture showed no signs of life in the years 1949-55.

The wall of silence was breached in 1955. There is little doubt that this change was one aspect of the new Soviet foreign policy and the effect of the 'Geneva climate' on East-West relations. The line followed by Soviet spokesmen when questioned at this time about the fate of the vanished Jewish writers was neither to admit nor to deny. It was apparent that the Russians had decided to prepare world opinion gradually for the revelation of the truth—that the majority of those in question were no longer alive or had passed many years in prison. Hints to this effect emerged in the course of a conversation between the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, G. Zarubin, and representatives of the American Jewish Workers' Committee.

The Soviet Foreign Minister of the day, Mr. Molotov, who was present on this occasion, said he had no objection to the proposal that a special delegation be sent to the Soviet Union to investigate the subject. However, no such delegation was ever permitted to enter Russia; at the same time, Soviet diplomats themselves began to release some scraps of information about the missing writers. Mr. Leonid Ilyichev, when asked at a press conference given by the Soviet delegation to the Geneva conference in July, 1955, what had happened to the Jewish writers, hinted that 'something not quite above board' had taken place in the war-time Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

Replies in a similar vein were given by a delegation of Soviet journalists, headed by Boris Polevoy, which visited the United States in October, 1955. Its members had apparently anticipated questions on the fate of the Jewish writers, and decided in advance what answer each member of the delegation would give. Polevoy himself was to reply that David Bergelson was dead—he knew about it because the deceased's son had applied to him, as Secretary of the Soviet Writers' Guild, in connection with the erection of a monument over his father's grave. Another member, N. M. Gribachev, would announce the death of Perets Markish. None of the journalists admitted to any definite knowledge of the other missing writers. They did say that a new Jewish journal was soon to be published in Moscow, and Polevoy disclosed that he himself was preparing an introduction to a Russian translation of a book of verse by the Jewish poet Leib Kvitko (without knowing whether or not he was still alive), now that an authors' committee had been set up to edit his writings.

The publication of a poem by Kvitko in the Warsaw *Volksstimme* occurred about the same time. Moreover, it was announced that the Jewish State Theatre in Poland was rehearsing a play by David Bergelson. Another report disclosed that preparations were under way in Moscow to reopen the Jewish State Theatre, but that there was a shortage of directors, actors, and playwrights. These indications of the resumption of Jewish cultural life implicitly acknowledged its suppression in previous years, although nothing was stated outright.

Reports of the revival of Jewish cultural life in the Soviet Union multiplied during the first weeks of 1956, prior to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party at which Khrushchev made his famous revelations about Stalin. Khrushchev, incidentally, did not touch on the suppression of Jewish culture. Meanwhile reports of Jewish artistic functions appeared not in the Soviet press itself but in papers outside Russia, whose chief source was the Warsaw *Volksstimme*. Indirectly, the Soviet authorities encouraged news of the resumption of Jewish artistic and cultural life through a bulletin published in June, 1956, by the Soviet delegation to the United Nations 'in the name of Jewish artists currently performing in Moscow.' At about the same time a rumour gained currency that a petition requesting the revival of Jewish cultural life was under consideration. Among those who signed the petition were the Jewish poet Aaron Vergelis, the writer Boris Polevoy and the composer Shostakovich.

The names of some of the missing writers began to appear early in 1956 in the Moscow *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, in short notices (at space intervals) reporting that special committees had been appointed by the Writers' Union (or its branches in the Ukraine and White Russia) to edit their literary legacies. Reports of the publication of translations (mostly into Russian, but also into Ukrainian and Byelo-russian) of the works of these authors and others also appeared. In addition, translations of poems by a few Jewish writers were printed in literary journals. No mention was made of the personal fate of the authors.

It is a fact that no official announcement concerning the rehabilitation of the Jewish writers has ever been made, just as to this day no official notice has been given of their execution. Unofficially it is known that the relatives of a number of the murdered writers were informed by the Soviet Prosecutor General that they were no longer alive. This official expressed his regret that they had fallen victim to the slanders and plots of 'Beria and his gang,' and promised that their names would be publicly cleared, a promise which has not been kept. Apparently the Soviet authorities consider that the posthumous publication of their literary legacies is adequate compensation.

The delay in 'righting the injustice' done to the Jewish writers and to Jewish culture in the Soviet Union seems remarkable in view of the official campaign to suggest that a 'new deal' began with the introduction of 'collective leadership' after Stalin's death. After the debunking of the 'doctors' plot,' hopes rose that public acknowledgment would be made of the wrong done in the last years of Stalin's life to Jewish culture and the men who created it.

Yet no hint of any move in this direction has come from Moscow. Literary and artistic circles in the Soviet Union have discussed at length their grievances against the authorities, but not a word has been said (if we can believe the reports printed in the Soviet press) about the eradication of an entire national culture. Ilya Ehrenburg hints at the nightmare of the 'doctors' plot' through the character of the Jewish woman doctor in his novel *The Thaw,* but maintains silence with regard to the affair of the Jewish writers. Moreover, no echo of their disappearance made itself heard at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers (November, 1954) in which 72 Jewish writers participated.

Indecision, irresolution, and obscurity have likewise marked Soviet policy and propaganda on the suppression of Jewish culture in more recent months, with regard both to what happened in the past and to plans for the future.

Thus the several foreign press delegations which visited the Soviet Union during 1956 were informed that responsibility for the liquidation of the Jewish writers should be laid on the 'Beria gang.' It was also emphasised that this was not a specifically Jewish tragedy, since the intelligentsia of other nations, notably those of the minorities, suffered equally from Beria's activities in the atmosphere engendered by the 'cult of the individual' under Stalin. But in the case of the Jews it was an entire culture, and not only individual contributors to it, that was the victim.

Part II

THE official explanation for the disappearance of Jewish culture is that it died a natural death —with the knowledge and consent of the Jews themselves. Jewish schools, theatres, and other institutions vanished because the demand for them gradually shrank to nothing as a result of internal developments and external factors acting in concert.

Soviet Jewry, enjoying full and equal rights, and with all doors open to it, no longer needed separate Jewish cultural institutions. Since no compulsion was put upon Jews to confine their national genius to Jewish schools, and since they had unlimited opportunities to attend the excellent institutions of higher general learning available, they themselves took to the Russian language and literature in preference to Yiddish. This analysis finds further confirmation, according to its Soviet proponents, in the long list of authors and artists of Jewish origin who have found their place in Soviet art and literature.

The official argument has found formal expression in Volume 15 of the second edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia.* In the section on 'Jews' we find (page 377) a few lines on Yiddish:

> 'The overwhelming majority of Jews speak the language of the nation among whom they live. In addition, a good many Jews living in Eastern Europe, or originating in these countries, speak Yiddish in their day-to-day intercourse. This language is based on one of the dialects of Middle German and is spoken by Polish, German, and, to a certain extent, by American and English Jews. In the past, the Jews of Russia also spoke Yiddish.'

Since the Encyclopedia uses the term 'Russia,' rather than 'Soviet Union,' the reference is apparently to Tsarist Russia.

An additional external factor which, it is alleged, led to the elimination of all demand for Jewish culture was the Second World War, which resulted in the destruction of many great Jewish centres in the Soviet Union. There is of course a contradiction between the claim that Yiddish was the language of Russian Jewry only 'in the past' and the assertion that Yiddish died with the destruction of the major Jewish centres during the recent war. Moreover, large Jewish communities have grown up anew since 1945, as noted by Western visitors to Minsk, Kiev, Odessa, Vilna, Lvov, Kishinev, and other cities. It seems odd that the victims of the Nazis were mostly Yiddish-speaking, while those Jews who escaped are said not to know Yiddish at all and to feel no need for it. There is con-

siderable evidence that, particularly during the war years, under the influence of the mass extermination of Jews, a vigorous revival of Judaism attracted adherents, even among the younger generation of Russian Jews.

The Soviet authorities discredit their own claim that there was no popular demand for Jewish culture by their open encouragement of reports of Jewish artistic functions in the years since 1955. Although there can be no question that these artistic performances were not of the best and could not compete technically with those on the Russian stage, the halls were reported to be packed, and in many instances unable to admit all those who wished to attend, among them many young persons. The fact that all evidence of Jewish culture disappeared, suddenly and at one blow, at the end of 1948, suggests that it did not die spontaneously or as a result of Nazi depredations. No one can be expected to believe that one bright day a community of some two million people voluntarily relinquished Hebrew print, Yiddish newspapers, and Jewish theatres and schools.

The oddity of these claims becomes the more pronounced when one remembers that the Soviet authorities, Jewish writers in the Soviet Union, and some Jewish circles in the West, for many years pointed with pride to the achievements of Jewish culture in Russia. The more successful Soviet-Jewish writers even claimed that Moscow had become the centre of Jewish artistic creation for the entire world, supplanting Warsaw and New York. The favourable conditions placed at the disposal of these writers, and the immense circulation of Yiddish books in the Soviet Union, tempted many Jewish writers to come to Russia and settle there.

The first edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, published in 1932, made much of the extraordinary growth of Jewish publishing houses, of the numerous newspapers and periodicals appearing in Yiddish, and the many Jewish theatres in operation. There were of course fluctuations in the extent of Jewish creative activity during the intervening years, and the tendency of Russian Jewry to assimilate the dominant culture probably continued unabated. But, according to one reliable source, 359 Jewish books were published in 1940, exclusive of periodicals, while during the Russo-German war, 90 new Jewish books appeared, apart from several literary almanacs, which incidentally disclosed the names of several new Yiddish writers.

An editorial which appeared in the *Volksstimme* of April 4, 1956, bears out the belief that the Soviet authorities had and have no clear-cut policy with regard to the future of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, or to the question of making public what had happened. It must be remembered that while the article appeared after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, it preceded by several months the Poznan riots and the Polish events last October. The piece was reprinted throughout the Jewish Communist press, including Western papers, and served as a guiding line for those who claimed that even in the field of Jewish culture the Soviet leaders had decided to make amends for all that Stalin and Beria had done. Its anonymous authors disclosed the names of writers and artists executed not only in the years between 1948 and 1954, but in the thirties as well. They attribute these crimes to the insidious activities of Beria and the Stalinist 'cult of the individual' which caused a 'perversion of the Soviet attitude towards minorities' in general and of Lenin's policy towards the Jewish minority in particular. Alongside this acknowledgment of 'regret' at what had been done, the editorial also suggested (1) that the return of the Soviet Union to 'Leninist norms' is a guarantee of a more favourable policy towards national minority groups in the future and consequently towards the Jewish population of the Soviet Union as well ; and (2) that Jewish cultural life is reviving and that '60 Soviet Yiddish writers are active in creative work' (none of the writers was mentioned by name although those who had been executed were identified). On balance the editorial struck a definitely pro-Soviet note. It spoke in glowing terms of the victory of 'Leninism' in the Soviet Communist Party (at the 20th Congress) and commented that 'in this victory we find our consolation ; it is our hope and our warranty for the future.' It also bitterly attacked the 'united front of haters of the Soviet Union who arouse the Jews against Communism, all those trouble makers in New York, Tel Aviv, and Paris

whose only aim is to make political capital out of 'our tragedy.'

Notwithstanding its orthodoxy, the *Volksstimme* editorial was termed 'a slanderous anti-Soviet article, a mixture of truth and lies' in an interview given by Leonid Ilyichev, the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Press Division, to the journalist Tabita Petran, which appeared in the New York *National Guardian* in September, 1956. Immediately after the publication of the interview, the editors of *Volksstimme* wrote to Ilyichev demanding an explanation. They waited six weeks for an answer which never came. Taking this silence as an admission by default that Ilyichev had made the remarks attributed to him, the *Volksstimme* on November 3, 1956, printed an open letter to Ilyichev in which it repeated, with added emphasis, the conclusions it had drawn earlier with regard to the extermination of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.

Much may also be learnt from the observations and conclusions brought back from the U.S.S.R. by Communist delegations which visited the country after the 20th Congress, notably the British C.P. delegation which toured the U.S.S.R. in October, 1956, and of whose eight members one, Professor Hyman Levy, was specially detailed to investigate the Jewish problem. The delegates could elicit no official comment on the disappearance of Jewish culture. The fact of the absolute suppression of Jewish literature since 1948 was confirmed, however, in the delegation's visit to the Lenin State Library in Moscow, where, according to the report, its members could not find in the Jewish section—containing thousands of Yiddish and Hebrew books and nearly every Yiddish book and newspaper published in the Soviet Union—'a single work in Yiddish published later than 1948. The only possible conclusion is that the printing of all books, newspapers, and journals in Yiddish came to a halt in that year.'

The obvious disinclination of the Soviet authorities to make any official pronouncement on the fate of Russia's Jewish culture was also remarked by Mr. Y. B. Saltzberg, one of the members of the four-man delegation sent to the Soviet Union in August, 1956, by the Canadian Labour Progressive Party. In its meetings with Soviet spokesmen, the group expressed the opinion that some authoritative statement would be of great assistance in clearing the air and creating an atmosphere conducive to the rebirth of Jewish communal and cultural activity in the U.S.S.R. The answer invariably was that no such announcement was needed, since the injustice was already being righted. Furthermore, any proclamation of this sort would only provoke other minorities which had suffered equally from Beria's illegal excesses to ask why the authorities singled out the Jews when making revelations of this nature.

It is only fair then to enquire if there is any evidence to substantiate the claim that 'the injustice is already being righted.' We have already noted the reports of Jewish song recitals and Yiddish readings, but it is significant that in recent months such reports have become notably less frequent. Another indication of the 'righting of the injustice' is the editing of the works of certain Jewish writers preparatory to their publication in translation. It is claimed that these works cannot be printed in the original for the time being owing to technical difficulties connected with Yiddish printing. This argument cannot stand up to closer examination. If the authorities were truly interested, the lack of technical means would not prove an insurmountable obstacle.

The truth of the matter is that talk of the revival of Jewish literature in the Soviet Union fits the Russian proverb: 'Thick clouds bring little rain.'

A quick glance at the Yiddish poems which have been chosen for translation shows that they have been thoroughly weeded of any Jewishness, although their authors, towards the end of their lives, reacting to the Nazi atrocities against the Jews, devoted many of their works to Jewish subjects. In addition, in two instances in which the translations were prefaced by introductions, nothing was said of the fate of the writers themselves.

In the June 28, 1956, issue of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* there appeared four poems by Feffer with an introduction by Mikhail Svetlov (himself a Jew). In none of the poems was there anything to indicate the nationality of the author. Svetlov told how he (together with his comrades, the poets Mikhail Golodny and Alexander Yasny

—both Jews who are no longer alive) had met Feffer in Kharkov in the first days of the new regime; how they had been all carried away (Feffer especially) by the news of the October Revolution to the point that they 'would settle for nothing less than a world-wide revolution.' Svetlov concludes his introduction with the ambiguous sentence: 'My generation, now in the twilight of its career, has entered a period of decline. Nevertheless, the ageless memories of my beloved friend and poet, of our life-long friendship, remain a precious treasure.'

Again, in the introduction by Nikolai Tikhonov to a selection of verse by Perets Markish which appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on July 19, 1956, there is no indication of the poet's fate. As if purposely to show that there was no intention of identifying Markish's verse as Jewish, Tikhonov declared that 'the ardour of Markish's poems brings to mind the works of Egisha Charnyitz, the wonderful Armenian poet.' Further on he says: 'The anger and hate with which Markish reviles Hitlerism as a threat to Soviet civilisation fill his poems with a new spirit.'

These remarks refer to Markish's wartime poetry, hitherto recognised as the strongest expressions of specifically Jewish feeling to be found in all Jewish literature dealing with the Nazi holocaust.

* * *

It is interesting to note that the first Jewish writer to merit publication in translation was Aron Vergelis—a minor poet of the late thirties—who from the literary viewpoint ranks far below those who were executed. In 1956, a collection of Vergelis' poems entitled *Yearnings* was published by *Sovetski Pisatel,* while *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of January 22, 1957, printed a favourable review of the collection and of the poet generally.

From what we know of Vergelis, it does not necessarily follow that he earned this privilege by his literary work. In the years before the war, Vergelis was known chiefly for his poems on the abortive Jewish settlement project in Biro-Bijan, and with the reports of the rebirth of Jewish culture in the U.S.S.R. his name once again made its appearance, a harbinger of spring.

Vergelis, one of the few Jewish writers who were not imprisoned, was mentioned again in the Soviet press towards the end of 1956. It was reported that a poem by him, 'My people will forever denounce murderers,' was read at a rally of Moscow writers protesting against the Anglo-French-Israel intervention in Egypt. This work was translated into Russian by the poet A. Y. Bezimenski (incidentally a Jew and one of the 'Soviet Jewish leaders' who signed the open letter to *Pravda* denouncing the 'criminal adventure launched by the Franco-British imperialists, and their hireling Israel against Egypt'); this apparently was intended as further proof of the revival of Jewish literature in the Soviet Union. It certainly gave an insight into the character of the revival.

The truth of the matter is that neither the Yiddish magazine whose impending appearance was predicted in the world Jewish press, nor a single Yiddish book has been published in the Soviet Union since 1948. This fact stands out in sharp contrast to the optimistic tidings brought back from the U.S.S.R. by numerous tourists. Thus, Mr. Haim Soler, publisher of the New York Communist daily, *Morgen-Freiheit,* quotes the writer V. Azhayev, whom he describes as head of the Committee for Jewish Literature, as saying that 'there are some 200 Jewish authors at present writing in Yiddish in the Soviet Union.' Another Jewish writer, Shmuel Galkin (one of those imprisoned for a time who has returned to Moscow since his release) told Soler that Jewish writers had a number of works under way and that 'a literature of abundance was growing out of the absence of literature.' However, signs of the fulfilment of these optimistic forecasts are long in coming. As a matter of fact, no work by Shmuel Galkin himself has so far been considered worthy of translation into Russian.

Nonetheless the nightmarish atmosphere which hung over the heads of Jewish writers prior to 1955 has been dispelled. They are now able to meet among themselves and receive visitors from abroad. Even the families of the executed writers are no longer social outcasts and it has been reported that several of the widows have taken upon themselves the editing of their husbands' works. Occasionally, Jewish writers gather at their departed colleagues' graves (insofar as they are known) to pay their

respects, or read selections from their works at intimate family gatherings. In rare instances, the vanished writers' works are the subject of lectures from a public platform.

* * *

For the time being, we may safely make three assumptions:

1. The works of Soviet Jewish authors (those who were executed as well as those who were spared) appear in Yiddish only beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union, chiefly in the Warsaw *Volksstimme*. Moreover, there is apparently little prospect of the revival of Jewish drama in the U.S.S.R. itself. Since the first rumours were spread of the reopening of the Jewish State Theatre in Moscow, it has been learned that the actor-manager of the Theatre, Sarah Rothbaum, has settled in Poland with the intention of joining the Jewish State Theatre there.

2. The outstanding characteristic of this surviving Jewish literature is unbounded loyalty to the Soviet fatherland—in spite of everything. To a certain extent, the writers also express the hope aroused by the 20th Party Congress that the previous 'deviations and mistakes' will not return to darken the bright path to Communism.

3. None of the reports published in the world Jewish press of plans for a resumption of Jewish cultural life emanated from high-placed Soviet leaders—and to the extent that the latter have made their views known, they have said nothing which could be interpreted as a definite promise. On the contrary, leading spokesmen of the regime have displayed a decidedly negative attitude, or at any rate one of doubt, when called upon to comment on the need for a distinct Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. As proof one need only examine the statement recently made by Khrushchev, Kaganovich, and Suslov.

Mr. Y. B. Saltzberg (already mentioned above) relates that at one of the meetings that the Canadian Labour Progressive Party delegation held with Soviet leaders a discussion lasting some two hours took place in Khrushchev's office, which was devoted almost entirely to the Jewish problem. Khrushchev reiterated the contention that 'Soviet Jews, on the whole, have become integrated into all aspects of Soviet life.' He repeatedly stressed the idea of 'integration, in the historical sense, as an indication of progress, while the opposite is a sign of reaction.'

This argument came after and in support of the claims made at earlier meetings attended by, among others, Ponomarev, a member of the Central Committee of the Party, and Suslov, a member of the Presidium. In answer to questions on the abrupt disappearance of Jewish culture from the Soviet scene in 1948, replies were given which clearly revealed the authorities' line of thought with regard to the future. According to Saltzberg, the Canadian delegation was told that the 'building of Socialism and the gigantic strides forward made by Soviet industry profoundly changed the economic composition of the Russian Jewish population. The tiny hamlet with its patriarchal society disappeared. Jews who in the past were hatters and tailors became factory hands in the metropolitan centres. Their interests are now identical with those of their fellow-workers. They speak the same language and belong to the same clubs and unions. They want their children to have every opportunity, and send them to the same school attended by the children of their fellows. They have become integrated into the life around them. Every job and profession is open to them, and they have no need for a distinct culture or a separate Yiddish social life. Those that do express a desire for a special Jewish culture are in the minority and are an unsuccessful element—it would be anarchism to base your conclusions on them.'

The American Jewish journalist, Dr. Haim Shoshkes, who visited the Soviet Union at about the same time, wrote upon his return of his meeting with Kaganovich, who expressed in general terms much the same opinion with regard to Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. He declared that he was not convinced that anyone actually needed Jewish culture, adding however that if even five or ten per cent of the Jewish population felt such a need, the authorities would be in duty bound to satisfy it. (It should be clear that it would not be easy to find the five or ten per cent willing to risk an open and direct appeal to the Government. The attitude of the

Soviet leaders on the question of Jewish culture is well known and not calculated to encourage initiative in this direction.)

An even more outspoken opinion was voiced by Suslov in his meeting with the British Communist delegation shortly before its departure from the U.S.S.R. In reply to a direct question on the prospect of reviving a Yiddish newspaper and a Yiddish theatre, Suslov said they would not reappear unless a specific demand was made for them. He used the familiar arguments to back up his statement: the advanced degree of Jewish assimilation into Russian life, the dispersion of the Jewish population over the length and breadth of the U.S.S.R. following the dissolution of ghetto life that came with the termination of restrictions on the movements of Jews, and the consequent fading away of Jewish culture. Suslov also touched on economic factors. He pointed out that the Jewish State Theatre used to play to almost empty houses and that Jewish newspapers were perennial money losers, while almost all other cultural enterprises in the Soviet Union were at least self-supporting financially. He was convinced that there was no point in bringing back to life a dead culture, although he too stressed that if a sufficiently large number of Russian Jews were to request it, they would be given their theatres and newspapers.

* * *

One incident can serve to demonstrate just how contradictory were the reasons given for the alleged decline of Jewish culture even before 1948. In 1949, a literary almanac, *Auf Naie Vegen,* containing prose and verse selections from the works of 67 Russian Jewish writers, was brought out in New York to celebrate 30 years of Soviet-Jewish literary creation and the 30th anniversary of the Revolution. Its preparation took longer than originally expected, and the collection appeared only after all signs of Jewish literary life had died out in the Soviet Union itself.

The material for the almanac had been sent to America from Moscow through channels opened during the war years, when close links were maintained between the Moscow Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and Jewish centres in the West, particularly 'progressive' organisations. It was edited by the writers' committee of the Anti-Fascist Committee. Two introductions were written for the almanac: one by the publisher and the other by the Soviet Jewish authoress, Rivka Rubin, dated Moscow, 1948. In the introduction (January, 1949) the publisher says: 'Among the authors whose works are included in this collection are those who have laboured in the vineyard of Jewish literature for twenty years and more. There are also newcomers who represent the abundant Jewish literary harvest in the Soviet Union. In no other area of Jewish literature have so many young authors made their mark in the past few years. This is further proof of the creative powers of Soviet Jewry.'

An even more enthusiastic hymn of praise to Soviet Jewish literature was sung by Rivka Rubin who illustrated the many-sided character of this literature with excerpts from dozens of authors. She asserted that 'our classical writers have realised their dream of creating a real national literature in the broadest meaning of the term under the conditions offered them by the Soviet Government,' and concluded by stating confidently that 'no obstacles will inhibit its growth. It will flourish and spread in the future in the U.S.S.R. even as our weary and tortured people are finally flourishing there.'

As these hopeful words were being printed the curtain came abruptly down on Jewish literature and all other forms of Jewish cultural life. Of the 67 writers whose works were included in *Auf Naie Vegen,* 20 had already passed away, either from natural causes or in service with the Red Army during the German invasion, before the collection reached the printer, that is, before the period of outright suppression in 1948-52. Their names appear in black borders. The collection did not include writers executed by the authorities during the purges of the thirties, whose names were given in the *Volksstimme* of February, 1956, cited above.

In a two-page article in the January 19, 195[illegible] number of *Volksstimme,* devoted almost entirely to a discussion of the Soviet Jewish humorist Z. Vendrov (David Vendrovsky), to mark his 80th birthday, we are afforded an opportuni[illegible]

of determining which of the 47 writers still alive when *Auf Naie Vegen* came out avoided liquidation in the last years of the Stalin regime. Vendrov, who had spent some time in prison and been released in 1955, hints at some of the things which happened to him during those years in a humorous tale 'A nostrum against old age—an interview with myself,' printed in the same issue of the Warsaw paper. But the most interesting item are the birthday greetings sent to the author by 'Soviet Jewish writers.' There are 60 signatures; of these only 22 appeared in *Auf Naie Vegen* eight years earlier.

If the Soviet authorities had permitted the revival of Jewish literature to be governed solely by the laws of supply and demand, if they had only been indifferent towards it, there is no doubt that it would have grown up anew with no further encouragement. In fact there is increasing evidence to show that the authorities not only have no intention of encouraging Jewish culture, but do not even propose to remain neutral. The policy is to eliminate it—and this policy cannot be disguised by the publication of works by Jewish authors outside the Soviet Union, or by the publication in the U.S.S.R. itself of a handful of translations from Yiddish into Russian.

PART III

THE JEW IN SOVIET LITERATURE (1948-1957)

by Z. Ben-Shlomo

Introduction

THE aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which Soviet literature reflects a reality about which very little is known from official Soviet sources: The life of the Jews in the Soviet Union, the social transformation occurring among them, and the changes in their status within Soviet society.

There is nothing new in the suggestion that Soviet letters serve as an important source of information for the student of Soviet affairs: from the admission of continued activity by anti-Soviet guerrillas in the Western Ukraine and the Baltic countries (in the novels of Lazis, the Latvian writer, and the writings of the Ukrainian litterateur Yaroslav Galan, who met his death at the hands of these partisans), down to inconvenient facts about the bread-and-butter aspects of daily life, matters which are never broached directly in the Soviet press. To what extent can we derive an idea about the life of the Jews in the Soviet Union, and the attitude of the authorities and the population towards them, from Soviet literature and from allied fields.

To answer this question, it is necessary to survey briefly the place occupied by Jews within Russian culture and Soviet literature. The cultural assimilation of the Jews within Russia is a phenomenon without precedent in Jewish history. Jews have lived in Russia for centuries, but not in the ethnic areas of the Great Russians (the Jewish 'Pale' was populated by Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, Lithuanians, and Poles; there were few Great Russians). Even in the eighties of the last century only a tiny minority among the Jews knew Russian. The process of acculturation within the last seventy years has no parallel even in the United States. Here it concerns us only as the historic background to the developments of the past decades. In view of this rapid transition from the ghetto to Russification it is noteworthy that there have been years when no Jewish figure was mentioned in any work of fiction published in the Soviet Union—an omission even more remarkable since a high proportion of the authors were Jews, and the Jewish background in which they grew up was clearly reflected in their earlier works.

I. The Pre-War Era

Soviet literature until 1941 may be divided into three periods:

(a) *The Civil War Years (1917-22)*, which served as a source of inspiration to an entire generation of Soviet writers and poets. In the works of this period, some of which are outstanding in Soviet literature, a rich variety of Jewish characters is introduced, *e.g.* in the writings of Isaac Babel, considered today by some critics in the West as the most accomplished practitioner of the short-story form since Chekhov and Maupassant*; there is also the partisan leader Levinson in Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* (Razgrom); Anna Pogodko, a

* See Hilary Corke's review of Isaac Babel's *Collected Stories* in *Encounter*, March, 1957.

secondary but memorable character in Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don,* and a whole gallery of characters in lesser works. Nikolai Ostrovski's two novels—*How the Steel was Tempered* and *Children of the Storm*—written in the thirties, also deal with the Civil War years, and many of the characters in them are Jewish, one of them even holding Zionist opinions. The chief Jewish figure in the poetry of the Civil War is that of Commissar Osip Kogan in Edvard Bagritski's *The Elegy of Opanas.*

(b) *The NEP (New Economic Policy) Years (1922-29)*: Among the works of literary merit dealing with those years only Sergei Malishkin's novel, *The Moon on the Right Side,* has Jewish characters. This work raised a literary storm on its appearance in 1926, because it described sexual orgies among the Komsomol youth. One might add two half-forgotten novels —Roizman's *Minus Six,* describing the life of the Nepmen, and Kozakov's *The Man who Fell Down,* which was directed against anti-Semitism.

(c) *The Industrialisation Years (1929-41)*: The model Soviet hero of this period is the industrial pioneer, *e.g.* the engineer David Margulies, in Valentin Katayev's novel *Forward oh Time.* The reaction of the older Jewish generation towards the upheaval in the country (and in the social status of the Jews) is exemplified in Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *The Second Day* by the aged rabbi Shwartsberg, who is tossed into the industrial centre of Kuznetsk in Soviet Asia. A Jewish figure presented in a humorous vein is the little watchmaker in Nikolai Pogodin's *Kremlin Chimes.*

These three periods in Soviet literature correspond to the three main stages of social change which Soviet Jewry went through. During the Civil War only a small minority among the Jews, mainly of the younger generation, participated in the struggle for the new regime, while most inhabitants of the small Jewish towns, racked by pogroms, were in a state of bewilderment as the foundations of their old way of life were undermined. In the NEP years many Jews were permitted to return to their age-old occupations, but only to give way to the double process of collectivisation and industrialisation, in the course of which Jews were directed to administrative and technical occupations and dispersed all over the country. The Russo-German war completed this process, and with the spread of anti-Semitism in the areas of Nazi occupation prepared the ground for the developments with which we are concerned.

Belatedly, the share of the Jews in the war against Germany, and the massacre of the Jewish population in the areas of Nazi occupation, began to be reflected in Soviet literature, though inadequately. Only in 1943 did Vasily Grossman publish his story *The Old Teacher,* which includes a description of the execution of an aged Jewish teacher together with the rest of the Jewish population of an occupied small town. Later Grossman also published his reportage *The Treblinka Inferno.* Boris Gorbatov has likewise given a powerful description of the fate of the Jews of an occupied town in his novel *The Unvanquished.* These authors are of Jewish origin. Others writing in Russian also expressed their horror at Nazi atrocities. We find this reaction in the poetry of Lev Ozerov, Pavel Antokolski and Margerita Aliger, but the poet A. Bezymenski had to publish his story *Tamara Savitskaya* in Yiddish.

Among Russian authors (*i.e.* non-Jews) only one has devoted a whole book to the description of a ghetto (apparently at Lvov)—*The Sun Rises in the East,* by Tatiana Velednitskaya. A few have devoted a few lines or an episode to the fate of the Jews in the occupied areas (Panferov's *Partisan Tale,* Valentin Katayev's *For Soviet Rule*). In Alexander Fadeyev's *The Young Guard,* long considered the outstanding Soviet novel of the Second World War and model of 'socialist realism,' there appears a rather ludicrous Jewish figure: a quiet, frail shortsighted man, father of one of the girls participating in the Krasnodon underground committee, who hides in a cupboard and is transferred to another town, where he will not be recognised as a Jew. Some memoirs by partisan commanders mention the fate of the Jews in the occupied areas and their share in the partisan movement, but the references are scanty or vague.

The reason for this virtual silence about the disaster that overtook East-European Jewry (descriptions of Nazi death camps by Soviet military correspondents generally avoided mentioning that most of the victims were Jews)

clearly political. Thus Emmanuel Kazakevich, once one of the best Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union, who took to writing in Russian, won the Stalin Prize for his book *A Meeting on the Oder,* published in 1946, which describes the conquest of Germany by the Russians and contains no trace of the feelings of vengeance common then to all Soviet soldiers in the war years. And when Kazakevich describes the Soviet Army's liberation of a concentration camp, its inmates are of all nationalities, but there are no Jews. . . . This, coming from an ex-Yiddish writer, strongly suggests that silence about the annihilation of the Jews followed official instructions. How else can one explain why a theme which is so dominant in the work of the vast majority of Polish writers (Jews and non-Jews, even members of the younger generation) is hardly noticeable in Soviet War literature?

A similar attitude affects the descriptions of the part played by Jews in the fighting. Only faint echoes of reality come through. During the war years we find the figure of Commissar Mirovits in Yuri Libedinski's (a writer of Jewish origin) *Gvardieitsi* (Men of the Guard), published in 1942. In the same year, Nathan Ribak published his Ukrainian work *Zbroya z Namy* (We Have the Arms), in which one character is a Jewish war hero (apparently under his real name). Jewish soldiers appear episodically in the works of Konstantin Simonov, Wanda Vassilewska, Lev Kassil, and the Soviet Navy writer Leonid Sobolev (here we even find documentary writing: Isaac Falkovsky, the hero, is the name of a submarine commander active during the war). In a play by the Ukrainian writer Alexander Korneichuk we find an old Jew who joins the partisans. In Alexander Bek's famous novel *Men of Panfilov* we find a young lieutenant bearing the Jewish name of Brumy, who loses control of himself during action and makes amends by undertaking a dangerous military mission. In *The Storm,* written in 1946-47, Ehrenburg has a hero Osip Alper, who is a major in the Soviet Army, and his wife, who gets killed at the front.

Apart from Ehrenburg's hero, the only Jewish figure who is not secondary, is Captain Farber in the novel *Trenches of Stalingrad* by the young writer Viktor Nekrasov, written in 1947. Captain Farber is a young mathematician who refuses to serve at headquarters or in the technical services, as befits his education, and insists on being transferred to the front. This episode is the more noteworthy since Nekrasov's later work clearly reflects the ferment among Soviet youth, especially among ex-servicemen and students. At the same time the change in the way he draws Jewish characters is rather instructive.

II. The Era of Militant Anti-Semitism (1948-1953)

IF THE Cold War was the proximate cause of the *Zhdanovshchina* in Soviet cultural life, the establishment of Israel and the consequent accentuation of national emotions among Soviet Jewry, reinforced latent Russian anti-Semitism and transformed it into State policy. Its most prominent manifestation in the cultural sphere was the hunt for 'cosmopolitans,' and later the eradication of what was left of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union. Soviet-Israeli relations are a subject by themselves. Here they will be discussed only to the extent that they are reflected in Soviet attitudes towards the Jews of the Soviet Union.

In 1947 there appeared in Moscow a book that can be considered as a turning point. *Far From Moscow* was by a young writer, Vasily Azhayev, and was welcomed by Soviet critics as the best description of the rear during the Second World War.

One of the industrial managers in the book, Zalkind, has clearly been drawn according to the 'traditional' pattern of positive Jewish figures in the literature of the twenties and thirties. One of the Russian characters says significantly: 'When I see Zalkind, I am reminded of Levinson in Fadeyev's *Razgrom.*' (On the other hand the auditor Liberman is presented as a less agreeable character from a Soviet viewpoint.) Zalkind is the last in the procession of 'positive' Jewish fictional heroes who have become models in Soviet literature—Levinson and Osip Kogan as partisan leaders in the Civil War, David Margulies among the leaders in the implementation of the five-year plans. From now on the Jew becomes an accidental figure, and in most cases a blatantly antipathetic one.

This attitude received retrospective sanction. The last two volumes of Alexei Tolstoy's trilogy *The Path of Suffering,* written during the Second World War, are full of contemptuous references to the Jews (made also by the Communist characters in the novel!) and repulsive Jewish characters (even when they are Communists). The extent to which this tendency received official encouragement can be gauged by the fact that the 1950 Stalin Prize was awarded to Vladimir Belayev's trilogy *The Ancient Fortress*; he describes the Civil War years in the small towns of Podolia (the Western Ukraine), *i.e.,* the same area and period described in Bagritski's poem *The Elegy of Opanas* and in Ostrovski's novels. In contrast Rita Ustinovich and Lazar Segal, the indomitable Jewish revolutionaries in Ostrovski's *How the Steel was Tempered,* Belayev features Yasha Tiktor the speculator, who shirks fighting with his comrades against Petliura and is expelled from the Komsomol, and Monka (a Russian nickname for Moses) Guzarchik, an anti-social character who receives a legacy from America and refuses to hand it over in order to 'build socialism.' True, among the positive types there is also a character with a Jewish name—Galya Kushnir—but the two characters whose Jewishness has been emphasised are among the most antipathetic in the novel. From the end of 1948 onwards, this attitude prevails also in the literature which describes the Russo-German war. In most cases Soviet writers avoid describing Jewish characters. For several years Semyon Bubenov's novel *The White Birch Tree* had been considered the best description of the Russo-German war, and it was also awarded a Stalin Prize. The second volume presents a Jewish supply officer by the name of Rubin who is a coward and malingerer. The ideal commander, Ozerov, constantly threatens to commission him as a front-line officer.

At this stage, the establishment of Israel begins to make its mark on the life of Soviet Jewry, and some reflection of this event can be found in Soviet literature. In 1948 a collection of autobiographical stories was published in Moscow, *Years of Life* by the Jewish Russian writer and journalist Alexander Isbakh (Isaac Bachrach), who won a reputation as a military correspondent during the Russo-Finnish war. One of the stories in the collection, *Bar Mitzvah,* not only describes this traditional Jewish ceremony and some Zionist characters without presenting them in a bad light, but even includes the 'Hatiqva,' the Zionist anthem—the first two lines of the refrain in the Hebrew original and the whole stanza in Russian. (The story was translated into English and published in *Commentary* in October, 1953.)

No other writer had previously dared to bring the Zionist anthem into his work. Isbakh must have thought that since it had become the anthem of a State whose establishment was aided by the Soviet Union, its publication was no crime, especially as, during the war, the performance of Chaikovski's '1812' which includes the Tsarist anthem, was permitted. He was accused of sympathising openly with Zionism and the Jewish religion, and the critics were particularly incensed at his daring in publishing the text of the Zionist anthem. A lethal review of the book appeared in the Moscow evening paper *Vechernaya Moskva* of March 14, 1949, and the more serious papers and literary reviews wrote in the same vein. Isbakh himself disappeared. Until 1956 his name did not appear in the Soviet press.

Another approach towards Zionism was taken by Ilya Ehrenburg in his novel *The Ninth Wave,* written in 1952, whose republication in the Soviet Union is unlikely now, as it includes denunciations of 'the traitor Tito.' In this work, which is a sequel to *The Storm,* Major Osip Alper, returning from the front at the end of the war to his empty home in Kiev, is greeted with insults accompanied by cries of 'Go to Palestine.' Ehrenburg's hero reacts in typical Ehrenburg fashion; he does not consider the remark an insult to his national and human dignity, but is hurt by the fact that a Soviet front-line officer is urged to move to 'an American colony.'

It should be noted that although the Soviet attitude towards Zionism has never been sympathetic, Palestine has not always been taboo as a literary subject, as it is today. In 1935, the Soviet writer Mark Egart (d. 1956), a Jewish Communist who returned to Russia from Palestine, published a two-volume novel entitled *Sunbaked Earth,* describing the life of Jewish workers in Tel Aviv in the twenties. It was

published with an introduction by Gorki. In May, 1947, the illustrated periodical *Ogonek* published two short stories about the life of the Hebrew settlements in Palestine by a writer hitherto unknown. According to *Ogonek,* the stories were translated from the 'Jewish,' a term which could mean either Hebrew or Yiddish.

Even more significant are the changes introduced in the *History of Literature* by Professor Timofeev, a mandatory text-book in Soviet secondary schools. This revision followed a *Pravda* article which criticised the book and established the principle of 'retrospective responsibility' ('the fact that the book was published before the decision of the Central Committee concerning the monthlies *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* does not excuse the author's mistakes'). The changes introduced in Timofeev's textbook included the complete eradication of any reference to Jewish literature. In *Russkaya Literatura,* a textbook published in 1946, it is stated of the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tichina that 'he translated Pushkin, the Georgian poet Vazha Pshevala, the Armenian poet Akop Akopian, the Yiddish poet Asher Schwartsman, the Bashkir poet Seifi Kudash and others into Ukrainian. The 1950 edition (*Russkaya Sovremennaya Literatura,* page 381) says that Pavlo Tichina translated into Ukrainian 'with great ability the poems of Pushkin, of the Byelo-Russian poet, Yanka Kupala, the Georgian poet Vazha Pshevala, the Armenian Akop Akopian, the Bashkirian Seifi Kudash, and others.' The chapter dealing with the works of Yiddish writers, included in the 1947 textbook, was omitted from the later edition.

Early in 1948 there appeared in Moscow, in Russian, a documentary work *The Ghetto Avengers,* dealing with the fate of the Minsk ghetto and the activities of the partisans from that ghetto. This is one of the few works published in the Soviet Union on this subject; from the middle of 1948 no further publications of this kind were possible. Early in 1949 Savva Golovanivski, the most talented Ukrainian poet of the younger generation, was accused of 'Jewish nationalism and hostility to the Soviet people' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta,* March 9, 1949). Golovanivski had published a poem, 'Abraham,' which described the murder by the Germans of an old Jew in the streets of Kiev, while 'Soviet people,' Russians and Ukrainians, looked on with indifference. Golovanivski was accused by Dmiterko, Deputy Chairman of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, at a plenary session of the Union, of 'slandering the Soviet people.' At the same session, Leonid Pervomaiski was accused of the same crime, although a book which has never been condemned, Ehrenburg's *The Storm,* presents the same picture of indifference by ordinary Russians towards the fate of the Jews.

The tendency to play down the persecution of the Jews in the areas of Nazi rule gave way, when anti-Semitism became official, to a policy of completely obliterating any mention of persecution. A case in point is the treatment of the literary legacy of the non-Jewish Ukrainian publicist, Yaroslav Galan. In 1950, Galan published in the Ukrainian monthly *Vitchizna* ('Homeland'), a series of essays under the title *Lvivsky Narysy* ('Lvov Impressions'), including one about 'The people of the Lvov Ghetto.' Shortly after the publication of these essays Galan was murdered. The introduction to his collected writings, published posthumously, attributes the murder to an agent of the self-same nationalists. When Galan's selected writings were published in Russian, the essay about the people of the Lvov ghetto was omitted.

The arrangement of the collected works of Maxim Gorki may serve as evidence of the tendencies prevailing in the last years before Stalin's death. Although the edition claimed to be complete and comprehensive—and it did indeed contain important new material not included in previous editions—most of Gorki's utterances dealing with Jewish subjects have been omitted. Thus the essay he wrote in honour of the modern Hebrew poet, H. N. Bialik (*Yevreiskaya Zhizn, April* 3, 1916), the article in praise of the Habimah Hebrew Theatre, published in 1922 in the Soviet press, and most important of all, Gorki's well-known article 'The Jewish Question,' published in 1906 in the Social-Democratic journal *Red Flag,* which was aimed against anti-Semitism, were omitted. The omission of this article is especially significant, at is was included in most collections of Gorki's non-fictional writings published in the Soviet Union before the 1940s. From Gorki's correspondence, published in the last volume, there were omitted the letters to the Jewish writer

Shalom Aleichem, and those to Oscar Gruzenberg, Gorki's lawyer in a well-known political lawsuit, which included uncomfortable passages, such as a sympathetic appreciation of the literary work of the Zionist leader and writer, Vladimir Jabotinsky.

III. The Thaw (1954-1956)

A survey of these years should open with the novel that gave the era its name—Ehrenburg's *The Thaw*. The anti-Semitism prevailing during Stalin's last years of life, especially during the doctors' plot period, is reflected in the novel, for Ehrenburg describes the treatment of the Jewish woman doctor Vera Sherer during the doctors' plot days and afterwards. There is an implied suggestion that the severity of the problem will abate gradually, with the progress of the thaw.

Another characteristic novel of the 'thaw' years is *In a Native Town,* by Viktor Nekrasov (*Novy Mir,* October-November, 1954). *Survey* readers are familiar with the contents of the novel from Mme. Vera Alexandrova's essay (S.S. No. 14). It was Mme. Alexandrova who first poined out that this novel (and similar ones during the same years) gave a definite reflection of the ferment among students and ex-servicemen, and showed understanding for people who are negative from the viewpoint of the Soviet regime; in this respect it prepared the way for Dudintsev's novel.

The importance of Nekrasov's novel lies in the fact that it gives a faithful rendering of Soviet post-war reality. Part of the novel is dominated by the figure of Chekmen, an ex-Army captain and dean of a faculty in an engineering institute. It is difficult to state definitely whether Chekmen is meant to be a Jew. During the hearings in the Party cell, he is twice called Alexei Ivanovich. But his surname is definitely non-Russian, and if he belonged to another national minority, Nekrasov would not have avoided stressing it, as do other Soviet writers acting under the necessity of cultivating 'the friendship of Soviet peoples.' But there are numerous indications of his Jewish origin. It is hinted that his wife and family were killed in the area occupied by the Germans. Chekmen is educated, shrewd, and cynical—qualities generally associated with Jewish intellectuals. Moreover, in some respects there is an affinity between the character of ex-captain Chekmen and the Jewish captain Farber in Nekrasov's previous novel, *Trenches of Stalingrad*. Farber was a mathematician who wanted to become a combat soldier ; Chekmen is a staff officer who returns to his academic career. As Nekrasov was one of the few non-Jewish Soviet authors to give prominence to the figure of a Jewish combat officer in a Soviet war novel, it would not be surprising if he included a Jewish figure in his second novel, too. But there is one difference: Farber is described in a favourable light, while from the first the reader feels antipathy towards Chekmen. Chekmen demands the expulsion of an old professor, accusing him of remaining in town during the Nazi occupation—an accusation which was undoubtedly made in most cases by Jews—and he meets with opposition from most of the students. Moreover, Chekmen refuses to believe that the professor, who remained in the occupied area, did *not* collaborate with the Nazis, a suspicion which again seems to reflect the bitterness of the Jew. The deep impression that the novel created in the Soviet Union is proof of its realism. It seems to me that Nekrasov reflects the prevailing mood when he describes the Jew as isolated from his environment. Having created a 'sympathetic' Jewish figure in his war novel, he now presents one in an unflattering light.

But more important than the writings of Ehrenburg and Nekrasov is the over-all balance sheet of Soviet fiction in those years—the absence of Jewish figures. This one can understand in novels dealing with rural life, but not in works dealing with city life, especially the life of the young and the students. In the 'liberalisation' period some writers began to raise objections to the censorship. The criticism was heard of omissions from Gorki's works, in regard to Gorki's relations with Lenin, his memories of Leonid Andreyev, etc. The critic Y. Silberstein also pointed out that while the editors had discovered 57 forgotten stories by Gorki, they did not include in his collected works his well-known youthful story *The Legend of the Hebrew* (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, June 16, 1956). After the 20th Congress of the Party and Khrushchev's speech, the tendency to rehabilitate liquidated or banned writers gain

ɔmentum. It restored to Soviet literature some ɛrary achievements with a Jewish subject, like gritski's poem, Ilf's and Petrov's humorous vels, and Isaac Babel's short stories, which ɛ scheduled to appear during the present year.

'. Ferment and Partial Retreat (End of 1956-June 1957)

The 'conspiracy of silence' is still in operation. iis is especially noticeable when we contrast with the relative increase of Jewish names in w memoirs, as well as in works reissued in ticipation of the fortieth anniversary of the tober Revolution. These include, for instance, ɛ memoirs of the Tsarist Lieutenant-General adimir Bonch-Bruevich, which appeared in talments at the beginning of 1957 in *Znamia*; ɛ-witness accounts of the Revolution; ɛmoirs of revolutionary veterans in the form a regular column in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, well as works of fiction on the same subject. ɛ-witness accounts still mention a great mber of Jews among the participants in the ɛvolution, although the names of the victims the great purges of the thirties (mainly Jews) ɛ omitted. In fiction, *e.g.* in Ilya Kremlev's logy *Bolsheviki*, there are hardly any Jews, ɛcept Sverdlov. Even in a novel by Emmanuel ɪzakevich (the ex-Yiddish author who wrote out the Russo-German War), *Heart of a iend*, there is no Jew among the leading aracters, except for a Samoilovich in the list soldiers' names.

Another instructive phenomenon is the sence of any Jewish characters in all the ɪring' literary works, some by Jewish authors Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, Daniel anin's *One's Own Opinion*, etc. On the other nd, we get a Jewish villain in a new setting—ris Issaevich Rosman, editor of the Russian iigrés newspaper in Harbin, in Natalya Ilina's vel *Vozvreshchenie*, published in instalments *Znamia* at the beginning of the present year. ɔart from being a villain, Rosman is repre-ɪted as being even more violently hostile to ɛ Soviet regime than the other White Russians.

An anti-Semitic tone is apparent in the ticism levelled at the works of the young poet ris Slutsky, who is of Jewish origin. After ɪrenburg had noticed Slutsky and described him in an article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* as the inheritor of the tradition of classical Russian poetry, the same publication printed a sharp attack on Slutsky, complaining, *inter alia*, that his poetry reads 'like a translation from a foreign tongue.' This is a clear hint at the Jewish origin and 'cosmopolitan background' of Slutsky, who was banned during the *Zhdanovshchina* and published nothing in the years 1947-56.

The intensification of Soviet propaganda against the rearmament of Western Germany has eliminated some of the taboos regarding the war-time Nazi massacres. In 1954 a translation of Lord Russell of Liverpool's book *The Scourge of the Swastika* appeared in Russian (but without circulation figures, which suggests that it was intended for limited circulation among loyal Party members). For the same reason *The Diary of Anne Frank* was mentioned for the first time, ten years after its publication, in *Novoe Vremia* of March 25, 1957.

The first Soviet edition since the twenties of Ivan Bunin's selected works exhibits a minor curiosity in that all the stories referring to Palestine and Judean history (a sequel to Bunin's visit to Palestine in 1906) have been deleted.

This attitude is parallelled in other fields. Thus Mishulin's secondary school textbook, which still mentions the kingdoms of Judea and Israel and the Bar Kochba rebellion, has been dropped from circulation and replaced by Kovalev's textbook, where Jews are not mentioned even in connection with the birth of Christianity.

On May 14, 1957, the well-known Ukrainian poet and high Soviet official, Mikola Bazhan, made a speech at the plenary session of the Presidium of the Soviet Writers' Union. Surprisingly, he attacked the tendency towards Russian chauvinism in the works of the younger Soviet writers. 'I am of the opinion that Valentin Ivanov's *Yellow Metal* is a product of yellow literature, impregnated with a spirit of great-power intolerance towards small nations. This V. Ivanov cast aspersions in a cunning manner on the Ukrainians, the Georgians, the Jews, the Armenians. . . . One could point out another work with such attitudes—*Near the Mystery*, by Nikolai Zhdanov.'

In this case we still have a connection between

manifestations of anti-Semitism and Great Russian chauvinism at the expense of the smaller nations of the Soviet Union. But in the story *Apartment No. 13,* by A. Valtseva, published in the new literary magazine *Moskva,* we find again, as we found in Nekrasov, Dudintsev, and other Soviet writers, that the man most meritorious from the viewpoint of the Soviet regime is 'negative' when viewed by writer or reader. In this case Sergei Sergeevich Kovalev, a retired Colonel who 'has devoted more than thirty years of his life to the service of the homeland,' is described as disagreeable, hated by the tenants and even by his wife, who in the end deserts him. 'A cynic, a sceptic, a man imbued with much of the spirit of the old officers and attracted by gypsy life.' But the author goes even further: 'He is an anti-Semite.'

Kovalev's neighbour, Pavel Alexandrovich the painter, describes this phenomenon in a conversation with his son, as '*Before the war anti-Semitism did not exist. But during the war the Fascist poison penetrated . . . by means of racialism.* Self-assertion by means of humiliating others.' This is the first time in Soviet literature that a writer has dared to assert that Soviet Army officers were infected by the Nazi mentality. The reaction to the story fitted the allegation.

'*The writer is not speaking only about Kovalev,*' warned *Red Star,* organ of the Army, in a peremptory tone. 'Valtseva went so far as to turn a Soviet officer almost into an enemy.'

The Congress for Cultural Freedom publishes this series in order to make available for general use documentation on Soviet cultural life. Edited by Walter Z. Laqueur, the series provides factual information from Soviet sources on the arts and sciences in the U.S.S.R. and on Soviet attitudes toward the non-Communist world.

Published by Congress for Cultural Freedom, 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1, and printed in Great Britain by The Sharon Press, 31 Furnival Street, London, E.C.4